

"Involving People"

The newsletter for learning disability carers



Carers
in Hertfordshire

charity registration number 1085491

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For more information about anything in this newsletter, or to find out more about our support for carers of people with a learning disability, contact:

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Welcome

My first year working at Carers in Hertfordshire has been a busy and exciting one. Among the ups has been that Hertfordshire County Council has listened to carers' concerns about the support available to help the people they care for, when they can no longer care for them or die. The Council has agreed to discuss contingency planning with carers.



There have also been some challenges, such as the County Council's cuts to learning disability provision – you can get an update about this on page two.

I'm keen to see some new faces at our 2017 forums as they enable you as a carer to share your views and ideas and have a voice on the development of health and care services in Hertfordshire. Many issues and questions that arise from our Learning Disability (LD) Carers' Forums are collated and taken to the Learning Disabilities Partnership Board via a report I submit every few months. Details of our 2017 forums are on page four. If you want to attend please can you book a place via the office (contact details are on the left). All carers are welcome to attend the Partnership Board meetings as observers. If you want to go along please contact Kim Warwick, Learning Disability Partnership Board Manager 01438 844083 or email kim.warwick@hertfordshire.gov.uk

In this newsletter you can read about the Rumble Awards, Healthwatch Hertfordshire and its Learning Disability Service Watch Group and an update about the Purple Star Strategy.

If you have any ideas about stories for future newsletters or forum speakers please email me, Sue Maskell, sue.maskell@carersinherts.org.uk

Making carers count

Good news for Purple Star Strategy

Hertfordshire County Council has decided to continue funding the Purple Star Strategy – that helps people with learning disabilities and their carers get better health and community care.

What is the Purple Star Strategy?

It involves Hertfordshire County Council awarding Purple Stars to health services that work hard to make sure they train staff in giving the best advice, service and help to people with learning disabilities and their carers.

Hilary Gardener, Strategic Liaison Nurse for Adults with Learning Disabilities, explained: "Services need to try and do everything they can to fit your needs and treat you well. Once awarded a star the team checks the services regularly."

At present there are 16 Purple Star accredited services across the county, four of which are GP practices. The team is currently working with 28 GP practices, which hope to achieve the Purple Star Promise standards in the next few months. They are also working with 16 other healthcare providers.

When awards are presented the Purple All-stars often attend (pictured below). The Purple All Stars are made up of adults with learning disabilities who inform and entertain with plays, puppet shows, advisory story-telling, dance routines and more.

The Council is looking for more volunteers to do secret shopper checks on places with Purple Stars. You can find out more by calling 01438 845372.

If you want to share your views on the Purple Star Strategy, contact Sue Maskell by calling 01992 58 69 69 or email sue.maskell@carersinherts.org.uk



eQUALITY

for people with learning disabilities

Campaigning to protect services that help carers

Part of our work involves campaigning with and on behalf of unpaid carers so that their voices are heard and that the support available makes their caring role easier.

Last year, we supported a carers' campaign against Hertfordshire County Council plans to reduce staff and activities at its in-house day services.

The changes were proposed in a bid to make savings and included having fewer paid staff and centres, stopping on site catering and closing services at certain times.

We organised meetings for carers to share their views and set up a petition calling for the Council to rethink plans, which over 1,900 people signed.

In September 2016 the Council agreed to day service provision changes to make savings. However, they considered carers' concerns and made some concessions, such as:

- Considering each of the eight services that prepare fresh meals individually rather than just stop self-catering.
- Allowing each centre to plan any shut down days and discuss plans and alternative arrangements with service users and their families in advance.

Feedback from carers is that they have not been aware of too many changes, although some activities have been temporarily halted due to understaffing as the day centres wait for the new policy to kick in before re-appointing.

Sue Maskell said: "Thank you to everyone who signed the petition, lobbied their MP's and joined the meetings. Please let us know if any changes have affected you or your families as we need to keep reporting back on this to the Learning Disability Partnership Board."

Spotlight on Healthwatch Hertfordshire

Carers in Hertfordshire works closely with many organisations to support unpaid carers and one of these is Healthwatch Hertfordshire. Our Learning Disabilities Involvement Worker, Sue Maskell, attends the *Healthwatch Hertfordshire Learning Disability Service Watch Group*. The group meets bi-monthly and is made up of carers, service providers and commissioners. Here we take a closer look at Healthwatch Hertfordshire and how it works with people with a learning disability and their carers and relatives.

What is Healthwatch Hertfordshire?

Healthwatch Hertfordshire is an independent charity that represents patients', service users' and carers' views on health and social care services in Hertfordshire. Although they are a charity they have statutory powers from the government, so services must listen to their recommendations and work with them to improve people's experiences.

Healthwatch Hertfordshire is founded on the principle that putting people at the centre of their health and social care is vital to its success. Reliant on ties with the community, much like Carers in Hertfordshire, they represent the people of Hertfordshire through links with local organisations and support services.

What does Healthwatch Hertfordshire do?

Its main purpose is to represent people's views and encourage people to speak up about their experiences with NHS health and social care.

To do this Healthwatch must:

- Collect evidence and do research;
- Work with NHS and social care decision

makers to help them improve service;

- Signpost people who need information;
- Raise issues with inspectors and regulators e.g. Care Quality Commission (CQC).

How does Healthwatch Hertfordshire work with people with Learning Disabilities?

Healthwatch Hertfordshire has worked with people with learning disabilities and their families since it started in 2013 and is always trying to do more. The *Learning Disability Service Watch Group* is an open forum and Healthwatch Hertfordshire is keen for new people with learning disabilities and their carers to come along so they can gather more representative feedback.

The Group meets from 1pm – 3pm bi-monthly at Douglas Tribe House, Welwyn Garden City, and dates for 2017 are 17th March, 19th May, 28th July, 29th September and 24th November. All information is provided in easy read and a sandwich lunch is provided before the meeting.

How can you get involved with the Group?

If you have a learning disability, are a carer or have an interest in learning disability services, you can just turn up to the Group meetings. You can also sign up for a regular Healthwatch newsletter or become a volunteer.

To get in touch with Healthwatch Hertfordshire call 01707 275978, email

info@healthwatchhertfordshire.co.uk or visit www.healthwatchhertfordshire.co.uk

healthwatch
Hertfordshire

Hertfordshire Healthwatch seeks Enter and View service volunteers

For the first time, Healthwatch Hertfordshire is planning to train people with learning disabilities and their carers as volunteers to undertake Enter and View visits – observations on health and social care providers to check whether they have good practice.

During visits Healthwatch staff will accompany trained volunteers to view services in action and together evaluate how well they are working from a patient and carer perspective. The findings will later be collated, fed back to the services and where appropriate services will be told the areas they should improve.

If you want to apply to be an Enter and View Volunteer please contact Tom Barrasso. Call Tom on 01707 275978 or email him at tom.barrasso@healthwatchhertfordshire.gov.uk

Rumble Awards

Do you know someone with a learning disability who makes a positive impact on your life or on the lives of others? If the answer is yes then you could put them forward for a Rumble Award.

The awards are organised by Pioneer Approaches, a not for profit company that offers training, support and services to people with a range of learning disabilities in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council.

Nominations are sought for Hertfordshire's Learning Disability Personalities of the Year. The awards celebrate the achievements and unique personalities of individuals with learning disabilities and differences.

The awards are held in honour of the late Keith Rumble, a founder member of The Pioneer Spirits, a group of people with a range of disabilities that create and provide performances that teach key messages about learning disabilities.

You have until 12pm on Friday 17th February to enter someone. For a nomination form please email ali@pioneerapproaches.co.uk you can then return it by email or by post to the address on the form.

This year's awards take place on Thursday 30th March in Stevenage. If it is too late to nominate someone this year, please think about who you could put forward in 2018.



Future Forums and Groups

Our forums are open to carers of adults with a Learning Disability, Autism or Asperger Syndrome. They provide an opportunity to meet others, listen to speakers, get information, and have your say about caring issues and improving services.

Upcoming Learning Disability Carers Forums:

Tuesday 4th April 2017

Tuesday 6th June 2017

Tuesday 1st August 2017

Tuesday 3rd October 2017

Tuesday 5th December 2017

All the meetings take place from 10am to 12.30pm and are followed by a sandwich lunch.

At Birchwood Leisure Centre, Longmead, Hatfield, AL10 0AN.

Our upcoming C4A Carers Group for people caring for an adult with high functioning Autism or Asperger Syndrome:

Monday 6th March 2017

Monday 8th May 2017

Monday 3rd July 2017

Monday 4th September 2017

Monday 6th November 2017

All of the meetings take place from 7.30pm to 9.30pm.

At Oxlease House, Travellers Lane, Hatfield, AL10 8TJ.

To book your place or receive information about either group, please contact us:

☎ **01992 58 69 69**

@ **contact@carersinherts.org.uk**

🌐 **www.carersinherts.org.uk**

If you don't have your own transport and wish to attend please contact us to discuss travel arrangements.

We can also cover the costs of alternative care.

Accessible Information

As part of NHS England's Accessible Information Standard we are in the process of asking carers registered with us if they have any communication or information needs related to a disability and if they do, how to meet those needs.

This could mean providing information in easy read if you have a learning disability or in large print if you have a visual impairment. We will be in touch, but if you have any needs and are speaking to us, please let us know so that we can update your records.